

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 26, 2004

Contact: Joe Rosato

(916) 653-9472

Mountain Lion Advisory Posted at Folsom Lake SRA

SACRAMENTO -- A chance encounter between two visitors and a mountain lion prompted California State Parks to post signs advising the public of the presence of the animal at the Folsom Lake State Recreation Area.

"This is a precautionary measure," said Folsom Sector Superintendent Scott Nakaji. "We want our visitors to be aware that mountain lions may be in the area at any time. We urge everyone to use common sense, be alert, stay on designated trails and follow the safety rules of the Department of Fish and Game."

The sign posting was the result of an encounter Wednesday between park visitors and a mountain lion on the bike trail near the Gold Fields District Office that is located just below Folsom Dam. The incident is under investigation by DFG.

Nakaji said mountain lions are known to frequent the area, and that it is not unusual for mountain lions to be seen by the public on occasion. Folsom Lake SRA is located in the Sierra-Nevada foothills, about 25 miles east of Sacramento.

According to the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), there has been a dramatic increase in the number of reported mountain lion sightings statewide in the wake of the Jan. 8 mountain lion attacks involving two Orange County cyclists,

The increase in reported sightings is not, however, being attributed to a change in mountain lion behavior, but rather the public's perception, said Doug Updike, a DFG senior wildlife biologist. "It's typical for reported sightings to spike after a high-profile incident such as an encounter or attack. We saw the same phenomenon after the two fatal mountain lion attacks in 1994," Updike said.

The DFG has issued the following recommendations for avoiding encounters with a mountain lion, as well as what to do if attacked by a mountain lion:

* **DON'T FEED WILDLIFE:** By feeding deer, raccoons or other wildlife in your yard, you may inadvertently attract mountain lions, which prey upon them.

* **DEER-PROOF LANDSCAPE:** Avoid using plants that deer prefer to eat; if landscaping attracts deer, mountain lions may be close by. The California Department of Fish and Game

has a brochure entitled "Gardening To Discourage Deer Damage" available at most DFG offices.

- * **LANDSCAPE FOR SAFETY:** Remove dense and/or low-lying vegetation that would provide good hiding places for mountain lions, especially around children's play areas; make it difficult for mountain lions to approach a yard unseen.

- * **INSTALL OUTDOOR LIGHTING:** Keep the house perimeter well lit at night - especially along walkways - to keep any approaching mountain lions visible.

- * **KEEP PETS SECURE:** Roaming pets are easy prey for hungry mountain lions. Either bring pets inside or keep them in a kennel with a secure top. Don't feed pets outside; this can attract raccoons and other mountain lion prey.

- * **KEEP LIVESTOCK SECURE:** Where practical, place livestock in enclosed sheds and barns at night, and be sure to secure all outbuildings.

- * **KEEP CHILDREN SAFE:** Keep a close watch on children whenever they play outdoors. Make sure children are inside before dusk and not outside before dawn. Talk with children about mountain lions and teach them what to do if they encounter one.

WHAT TO DO IF ENCOUNTERING A MOUNTAIN LION?

- * **DO NOT HIKE ALONE:** Go in groups, with adults supervising children.

- * **KEEP CHILDREN CLOSE TO YOU:** Observations of captured wild mountain lions reveal that the animals seem especially drawn to children. Keep children within your sight at all times.

- * **DO NOT APPROACH A LION:** Most mountain lions will try to avoid a confrontation. Give them a way to escape.

- * **DO NOT RUN FROM A LION:** Running may stimulate a mountain lion's instinct to chase. Instead, stand and face the animal. Make eye contact. If there are small children there, pick them up if possible so they don't panic and run. Although it may be awkward, pick them up without bending over or turning away from the mountain lion.

- * **DO NOT CROUCH DOWN OR BEND OVER:** In Nepal, a researcher studying tigers and leopards watched the big cats kill cattle and domestic water buffalo while ignoring humans standing nearby. He surmised that a human standing up is just not the right shape for a cat's prey. On the other hand, a person squatting or bending over looks a lot like a four-legged prey animal. When in mountain lion country, avoid squatting, crouching or bending over, even when picking up children.

- * **APPEAR LARGER:** Raise your arms. Open your jacket if you are wearing one. Again, pick up small children. Throw stones, branches, or whatever you can reach without crouching or turning your back. Wave your arms slowly and speak firmly in a loud voice. The idea is to convince the mountain lion that you are not prey and that you may be a danger to it.

- * **FIGHT BACK IF ATTACKED:** Many potential victims have fought back successfully with rocks, sticks, caps, jackets, garden tools and their bare hands. Since a mountain lion usually tries to bite the head or neck, try to remain standing and face the attacking animal.

For more information, visit the DFG mountain lion Web Site at
<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/lion/index.html>

###